

Policy matters!

VIRGINIA WINSHIP
VICE CHAIRPERSON, SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Policies are principles adopted by a School Committee to chart a course of action. They may be broad or narrow, depending on the area that they address. Regulations are detailed directions to put policy in place, and are generally developed by school administration. Therefore, policy is the “what and why” of an issue, while regulation is “how.” Clearly, this defines a distinct separation of duties between the members of a School Committee and district administration.

In Shrewsbury, as in many other school districts in Massachusetts, the School Committee has developed a focused sub-committee to address the creation of new policies and revision or deletion of those that are outdated. This year, school committee members Kristina Palomba and Virginia Winship chose to devote their efforts to this function. In this role, they work collaboratively with district administration, staff, and community members to create draft policies to present to the full School Committee. Often they are able to find examples of similar policies in other districts to use as a guide rather than “reinventing the wheel.” After review and debate, these draft policies are read aloud during two regular School Committee meetings. The first and second readings allow opportunity for further discussion among members and interested community members, plus revision if warranted. At the completion of the second reading, a formal vote is taken whether to put the policy in place.

The need for policies most often comes from areas of concern within the district; however, policies can also be mandated by changes in legislation or Department of Education (DOE) regulations, guidelines or practices. Last school year, four major policies were established within the district: the Facilities Use Policy, the Homework Policy, the Acceptable Use Policy (related to use of Instructional technology in our schools), and the Physical Restraint Policy. Work on two of these policies had gone on for over a year before they were finalized. One of the four, regarding appropriate circumstances and techniques in the physical restraint of students, was needed to fulfill a DOE requirement.

Currently, the policy sub-committee is drafting a new policy that addresses types of written materials or notices that should be distributed through our schools. Several more are in the queue for consideration, including a selection policy for media purchases, grade retention, student fundraising, and a revised transportation policy.

Oak Street renovation begins

DR. STEPHEN LOBBAN
MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

The enrollment increases that necessitated construction of the Floral Street School in 1997 and the new high school in 2002 are once again presenting challenges to the Oak Street Renovation Project. Work has now begun based on plans developed three years ago and is proceeding on several fronts simultaneously.

The District Coordinating Council (comprised of each district school's parent, teacher, student and principal representatives) has met with Superintendent Anthony Bent and Business Manager Patrick Collins to address the yet-to-be resolved grade configuration. Four considerations are before the Council regarding the former high school:

1. It becomes one of two grade 5-8 middle schools - the current middle school becomes the other
2. It becomes a grade 7-8 middle school - the current middle school becomes a grade 5-6 lower middle school
3. It becomes a grade 7-8 middle school - the current middle school becomes a grade 1-6 elementary school
4. It becomes a grade 5-6 lower middle school - the current middle school becomes a grade 7-8 middle school

The Coordinating Council will make its recommendation to the School Committee, who will make a final determination on grade assignments prior to the end of the current school year.

At the same time, the construction work to renovate the former high school is now underway. As this work proceeds the enrollment projections for any two grades to be housed at this site are a concern. Specifically, the project was developed with a projected school enrollment of 900 students. Based on information provided by the



PHOTO BY DAWNA ALPHONSE

Jim Dever and Ken Brammer from Reliable Fence set up the barrier around the former high school in preparation for renovations.

Town Manager's office, that capacity will be exceeded in September 2004 when the school is scheduled to come back on line with an anticipated enrollment of over 900 students; within four years the enrollment will be over 1000 students. A team comprised of SMS teachers, supervisors responsible for instructional programs, the building administration and Patrick Collins has met to define the use of existing space at the former high school for 200 students more than the number represented in the plan developed three years ago. It is anticipated that this group will complete its work by the end of 2002, forwarding its recommendations to the project architects and existing High School/Middle School Building Committee members for their consideration.

Finally, the expected September 2004 opening requires that decisions be made on some of the basic equipment needs now. The need to have a single individual responsible for the

detailed coordination of this early work, and much more that will follow, has resulted in the High School/Middle School Building Committee's approval of the former Floral Street School Principal, Ellen Fairbanks, as a consultant to coordinate the logistical aspects of this project. Ellen's direct involvement in construction of the Floral Street School and knowledge of the Shrewsbury school community will be an invaluable resource to the students and staff impacted by this work.

The Town of Shrewsbury's involvement and investment in the education of their children is unique. Much remains to be done to bring the “45 Oak Street” project to completion by September 2004. The accomplishments of the community in recent years in meeting similar challenges ensures that the task ahead, once completed, will add to our pride in providing the very best education we can to the young people of our community.

New Shrewsbury High School opens

KEN LARGESS
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, SHS

After years of planning, the big question for the high school administration was: would the new Shrewsbury High School function as planned? Several areas were of particular concern.

Would the long driveways, spacious parking lots and sweeping bus dock be sufficient to move all of the traffic to and from school safely and efficiently?

Would there be enough parking spaces?

Would the hallways and stairwells be wide enough to avoid the gridlock we had become accustomed to during passing periods at 45 Oak Street?

Could we possibly feed all of our students and staff in four, twenty-five minute lunch periods in our beautiful new serving area and Commons?

What would dismissal be like with all of our students making their way to the bus dock and parking lots?

These questions and others involving furniture, technology and unfinished spaces kept the anxiety level at a peak before school opened this fall.

After several months of adjustments, modifications, and accommodations, most spaces in the new Shrewsbury High School are now complete and in full use. The years of meeting, planning, and designing have paid off. Students and staff move about the building easily and without traffic jams: large staircases, including the grand staircase and balcony, facilitate movement to and from lunch in the Commons. Outdoor traffic is directed by clear signage and traffic markings, which regulate the cars and buses. Lunches are orderly and efficient due to the excellent work of the cafeteria and custodial staffs. Dismissal is a carefully orchestrated event, the success of which depends on timing, patience and courtesy. The Laidlaw Bus Company. Drivers have been critical in their contributions to a safe and efficient dismissal.

This beautiful facility is beginning to feel like home. It's beginning to feel like Shrewsbury High School.

Editor's note: Ken Largess played a key role in the decision-making process as the new high school was being planned and as the structure rose from the ground. The entire community is fortunate to have someone of his experience, insight, and dedication that resulted in a school that makes everyone proud to be associated with Shrewsbury.



PHOTO BY DAWNA ALPHONSE

Students enjoy lunch in the new high school cafeteria.

Housing Starts

August-9
September- 18
October- 6
November- 17

